THE SUBORDINATE LODGE SHOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE

By Joe P. Bowdoin, Grand Master, Georgia.

To my mind the education of the Craftsman in Masonic principles can come only from the Fraternity. The Fraternity is primarily the Masonic subordinate lodge. It is in the subordinate lodge that the Mason learns of his duties to God, his country, his fellow man and himself. Every Grand Jurisdiction is only as strong as its subordinate organizations. Therefore the problem of education rests with its constituent lodges. A Grand Lodge can make its plans for education, but the inspiration for and the attainment of knowledge can come and must come from its lodge leaders.

When our lodges shall learn that a ritual is only for interpretation, that symbols are merely for explanation, and that true Masonry lies solely in the proper application of the emblems, then shall the pregnant possibilities of learning be put into realities. When the ritual and ceremonies are employed for the above purposes, and discarded as simply a dramatic performance, we shall approach the full opportunity that awaits us.

In Georgia, we are endeavouring to get away from the grinding out of candidates and conferring of degrees. At our 1922 annual communication in October last, our General Welfare Committee brought in a resolution, which was adopted, creating a Committee on Masonic Education. This committee is headed by our Past Grand Master, N.H. Ballard, a prominent Masonic student and superintendent of the Georgia State Department of Education.

The committee will arrange a series of study courses for the various lodges. It will present a plan that will endeavour to make Masons as contrawise to the recent desire on the part of lodges to make members. In our Jurisdiction we have annual conventions of districts and counties. The state is divided into districts, and each year there are the district and county conventions. It has been a custom to confine these conventions mostly to the "rendition of the work." Our Committee on Masonic Education will also prepare educational programs for these conventions, so that the Craftsman may learn of the hidden truths and principles of the Fraternity, that he may become more than a mere poll-parrot to recite the ritual "letter perfect."

In other words, our Masonic Educational Committee, better knowing the needs of our Georgia Craftsmen, will endeavour to provide for Georgia Masons what the Masonic Service Association of the United States is doing through its program.

The plan is young with us, but Georgia Masons are determined to make Masonry a system for the development of its members along the best and broadest lines of knowledge.

My idea is, if I may take the liberty of quoting, summed up in a paragraph of the introduction to the review of Georgia's Foreign Correspondence report of 1920, as follows:

> "Out of all the chaos, readjustment and confusion, there is being awakened in American Masonry the ideal of a bigger, broader and better education. We cannot say it is the birth of

a new ideal; it is more of a resurrection of the old principles of our forefathers as written in the Declaration of Principles of our nation. It is the re-application of Masonic tenets to social and political creeds (not through organization as a Fraternity, but by individualistic preparedness); it is the education of the Craftsman to the highest plane of citizenship through his Masonic ideals. This new education, thank God, has no reference to the worn-out bromidic platitude of a 'more beautifully rendered letter-perfect ritual..... The education that is to be urged is an American Masonic education, having for its three-fold purpose the conservation of the Republic, the cooperation of pure citizenship, and the Americanization of the people....."

The Builder Magazine
April 1923 - Volume IX - Number 4